

COG Annual Awards: Jaramillo, Wilson recognized as ‘champions’

Written by By Don Jaramillo City of Grants Special Projects
Friday, 08 September 2017 03:05



GRANTS – Two longtime City of Grants residents were recognized during the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments annual luncheon.

Each year, the NWNMCOG, commonly referred to as COG, selects individuals from each of the three counties it serves for the awards of “Regional Champion”. In addition, COG, the non-profit organization that assists local governments, this year chose to include an “At Large Champion.”

City of Grants manager Laura Jaramillo was awarded Regional Champion for Cibola County and Arnold Wilson, a US Forest Service and Mt. Taylor Ranger District representative, was awarded as At Large Champion. Both, Jaramillo and Wilson, were recognized for their part in the Zuni Mountains Trails Project and associated projects.

“It is an honor to be recognized and acknowledged for the work that not only I, but many, conducted over an 8-year time span to help in the process that now will enable us to designate trails and trailheads in the Zuni Mountains,” said Jaramillo after she accepted the award.

Jaramillo, a longtime strong advocate for trails, is a member on the Mt. Taylor Zuni Mountain Collaborative and the Zuni Mountain Trail Partnership.

“This award reinforces the idea that commitment, hard work, patience, and perseverance pays off,” she said. “As we move forward with the Zuni Mountain Trails project, I feel proud to know

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that I was able to make a contribution to a project that I feel will have a tremendous benefit to our region. I thank McKinley County and more specifically Larry Winn, and The Cibola Forest Service for reaching out and inviting Grants/Cibola County to be a part of this project and for helping to lead the process.”

New assistant city manager for the City of Grants, Les Gaines, presented Jaramillo with the award on Wednesday at the El Morro Events Center in Gallup, where COG’s annual luncheon took place.

Jaramillo, a former educator including being principal at Mesa View Elementary for three years, was director of Future Family Foundations Center for 14 years where she was credited for gaining more than \$3 million in grant funds. The Family Center provides services and programs to support the positive development of individuals and families in Cibola County.

Jaramillo, who is married with three grown children and two grandchildren, has now been Grants’ city manager for three years. Recently, she strongly recommended to the mayor and council that the city provide fiscal agent services to the county for its upcoming Recreational Trails Program grant to build-out the Quartz Hill trail system. Jaramillo’s recommendation was supported unanimously by the council.

“She is in no doubt the most diligent member of the Partnership highlighted in her willingness to go the extra-mile,” said a COG representative. “The partnership depending on the fact that when Laura gave her word, things got done... The COG is bestowing Laura Jaramillo with this award to cement her leadership in this critical project and on many successful regional initiatives. She never lost sight of the bigger picture that this regional project would raise all boat and provide an economic driver for the region. Without her vision and leadership, the Zuni Mountain Trails Project would not have been possible.”

Also recognized as regional champions were Larry Winn of McKinley County and Arvin Trujillo San Juan County.

The outside partner, or “At Large Champion,” recognized was Wilson, a Forest Service employee in the area for more than 20 years. From timber to recreation; from fires to restoration, Wilson has managed area forests and its resources with distinction and with a light

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touch.

COG provided Wilson with the award to shine a spotlight on his humble and unsung service to the region and for assisting the Partnership in navigating the Forest Service system for decades.

A COG representative said, “In May 2017 when District Ranger Alvin Whitehair signed the Decision Notice, the Partnership learned that nearly \$1.7 million was going to be invested to start the 200 plus non-motorized, multi-use trail system. While many of us dreamed that this day would happen, Arnold made it happen, day in and day out.”

Trail design and construction will start in the Spring of 2019.

By Don Jaramillo

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